THE

CRISIS:

ADDRESSED

TO

THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND,

ON

THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON'S RETURN TO POWER.

BY A BARRISTER OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE.

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THE CRISIS,

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AS this is unquestionably a moment of the highest importance to all Europe, but more particularly to the people of England, whose interests are most deeply involved in the measures, which shall be adopted by the existing ministers; it may not be deemed obtrusive to offer a few remarks to the consideration of the country at large. It is not my intention to enter into party feeling, or to enter upon the different views of the manufacturing, the commercial, or the agricultural interests, in contra-

distinction to each other; but to make a few observations upon the system of politics, which has now prevailed for nearly thirty years. In making these observations, I may only occasion a recurrence of ideas, which have made a momentary impression upon the mind of the country, but which have been made to pass away by the quick succession of extraordinary events, without leaving that conviction, which might now lead to a more correct judgment upon the conduct that would most assist the general interest of this country to pursue.

It is therefore for the purpose of placing many of the past events in one view, of showing what consequences have resulted from that system of politics pursued by Europe at large, and this country in particular, during this period, that I am induced to address the country.

It is not necessary to take a greater

retrospect than the beginning of the French revolution, nor is it necessary to enter upon the detail of the transactions, which then took place. The French nation were disgusted with the corruptions of the court. The parliament of Paris, in 1789, remonstrated with Louis XVI upon the necessity of introducing heavier burdens upon the people. The inefficacy of the "Beds of Justice" and Seance Royale, the weakness, inconstancy, and dissimulation of the King, produced the *National* Assembly, and the famous Declaration of Rights, which it is not here necessary to transcribe. This revolution in France occasioned great sensations throughout Europe. The different cabinets immediately set themselves to work for the purpose of supporting the royal, against the power of the people. The circular of Padua, issued on the 6th of July, 1791, by the emperor Leopold, may be quoted as

containing the sentiments of all the ruling powers :—

" Before the king's acceptance of the constitution, France presents to Europe the spectacle of a legitimate king compelled, by atrocious violence, to fly, solemnly protesting against the concession, which had been extorted from him ; and, soon after, arrested and detained prisoner by the people. His imperial majesty, therefore, invites the powers of Europe to declare,

" 1. That they all regard the cause of his christian majesty as their own.

" 2. That they demand, that the king and his family may be instantly set at liberty, and the inviolability and respect may be observed towards them, which the rights of nature and the institutions of man loudly call for from subjects towards their sovereigns.

" 3. That they will unite for the pur-

pose of inflicting *dreadful vengeance*, in case of any future restraint being imposed, or any farther indignity offered to the king or royal family.

"4. That they will acknowledge no laws, established in France, unless sanctioned by the voluntary consent of the king, in a state of perfect and absolute freedom.

"5. If these proposals are not acceded to by France, that they will employ every means in their power to put an end to the existence of the evil in France, and to prevent its spreading into their *own dominions.*"

On the 24th of August, 1791, the emperor Leopold, the king of Prussia, and the elector of Saxony, met at the castle of Pilnitz, in Lusatia, where they remained till the 28th. The precise articles of this treaty, though they have never been authentically divulged, are, in substance, perfectly well known. On the 27th, the emperor de-

livered to the count d' Artois, who assisted at the conference, the following declaration: —

"That the emperor and the king of Prussia, having heard the desire and representation of monsieur, and of his royal highness the count d' Artois, declare jointly, that they regard the situation in which his majesty actually is as an object of common interest to all the subjects of Europe. They hope, that this concern cannot fail to be acknowledged by the powers, whose assistance is claimed; and that, in consequence, they will not refuse to employ, jointly with their said majesties, the most efficacious means, in proportion to their power, to place the king of France in a state to settle, in the most perfect liberty, the foundations of a monarchical government, equally suitable to the right of sovereigns and the welfare of the French. Then, and in that case, their said majes-

ties are decided to act quickly, and with one accord, with the forces necessary to obtain the common end proposed. In the mean time, they will give suitable orders to their troops, that they may be ready to put themselves in motion." — Signed by the emperor and the king of Prussia.

In March, 1792, Leopold died, and was succeeded by his son, Francis the Second. This event made not the least change in the system of Austrian policy. It is necessary, in order to preserve connexion in this detail, to notice a letter, which was written by the king of France to the king of England, expressing, in flattering terms, his obligations to his Britannic majesty, for his *impartial* conduct, and making eager advances for the formation of a treaty of amity and alliance. A distant and evasive answer was returned.

In July, 1792, the combined armies of Austria and Prussia had entered France,

under the duke of Brunswick, and issued a proclamation announcing the most dreadful vengeance against the French nation. Such of them as are found in arms against the troops of the allied powers are threatened to be punished as *rebels* to their king, and destroyers of the public tranquillity; and the city of Paris, in case the king, queen, and royal family are not set at liberty, threatened to be delivered up to the horrors of military execution. The consequence of this was the victory at Jemappe; and, before the close of the year 1792, the whole of the Austrian Low Countries (Luxembourgh only excepted), together with the city and territory of Liege, were subjugated by the victorious arms of France.

On the success of the French arms in Flanders, the English court, having first recalled lord Gower, its ambassador, made an unsolicited offer of assistance to the

states general in case of need, which was not accepted.

The causes of the subversion of the French monarchy, and the nature of the provocations and injuries, which preceded and produced that event, not being sufficiently understood in England, it made an impression, very unfavourable, upon the generality of the people, already biassed and perverted by the inflammatory declamations of many leading men in power: all attempts at conciliation with France, by the more moderate part, were not only unsuccessful, but were regarded as insidious designs against our own government. To send an ambassador to France, said Mr. Burke, would be the prelude to the murder of our own sovereign; and the language of the then minister was, that, if we were forced into a war, we must prove successful and glorious.

Although the determination of the

English court was from the first sufficiently manifest, the *powers* of France left no means unessayed to attempt an accommodation. M. Chauvelin presented a memorial to lord Grenville, stating an earnest desire to know the intentions of the British government: to this his lordship returned an answer, upon which I shall not now comment. It led to farther communication, in which, considerable mildness and assurance of a sincere desire for peace, renouncing all conquest on the part of France, was unequivocally declared; and ended in the dismissal of M. Chauvelin, at a very short notice. In consequence of this, on the 1st of February, 1793, war was declared by France against England and the stadtholder of Holland.

Such, then, in 1793, was the situation of the French nation. The greater part of Europe in league to restore a monarchy, which was destroyed; and, in the lan-

guage of these allies, not only the horrors of war were to be inflicted on this devoted nation, but the whole country were to be treated as rebels, for daring to defend their own opinions.

It is not my intention to vindicate the horrors of many parts of the French revolution, but only to show the conduct of the different powers of Europe. Of the eleven monarchies of Europe, nine have, either in the earlier or later stages, declared their decided hostility to it. The ostensible purposes of these leagues were, to restore the Bourbon dynasty to the throne, and to dictate to the people of France who should be their *rulers*. Their combinations roused the energies of the people; and, after the convulsions of nearly thirty years, France has proved triumphant. Whether the line of policy then pursued was right or not I shall not

now discuss, but proceed with my statement.

France, then, in 1793, was in a state of open war with Austria, Prussia, Great Britain, Spain, Sardinia, and the Sicilies. Her principal armies had been driven from all her recent conquests; and, by the defection of Dumourier, in a state of complete disorganization. M. le Brun, minister of foreign affairs in France, addressed a letter to lord Grenville, stating, that the French republic was desirous to terminate all differences, and to end a war dreadful to humanity. To this advance, no attention was paid by the British government. Here, then, when France was beaten and her high pretensions humbled she sued for accommodation; but it was not the reigning policy to admit negotiation: she then felt driven to a desperate resistance.

In a session of the French government, held August 16, Barrere conceived the project of inviting the French people to rise *en masse* to expel the invaders from their territory. This plan was organized with singular dispatch. The consequence of their unanimity and ardour in the cause produced victory and success on every side. The Austrian and Prussian armies retreated.

The English minister at Genoa insisted upon an unqualified declaration of hostility on the part of that republic against France, which was refused. The same was attempted at Florence, and the grand duke found it necessary to accede. I state these circumstances for the purpose of showing, how much has been done in order to reduce the power of France: but France increased her conquests on every side. Early in 1794, France was in possession of the whole of Flanders and Brabant; and, in

general, all Germany bounded by the Rhine. On the side of Italy, France occupied the duchy of Savoy and a great part of Piedmont, the city and county of Nice, and the principality of Monaco. On that of Spain, Biscay and Catalonia. It is hardly necessary to trace the vicissitudes of the last twenty years—from the year 1794 until 1814—I think I have sufficiently made out my point, in proving the unanimity of opinion for the restoration of the Bourbons or the destruction of the French nation.

From this time until 1814, a period of twenty years, France was still the pre-eminent, predominating power of Europe. A genius had sprung forth, in the turbulence of the tempest, who had turned the convulsions of the times, with consummate address and ability, to his own aggrandisement; during which time, England has accumulated a debt, the interest of which

amounts to twenty-five millions, and which must be raised by taxation, before the annual expenses of the government can be supplied; and which, upon a *peace* establishment, the present ministers say, must amount to nineteen millions: so that forty millions must be annually raised upon this country to meet its own expenditure.

It is not necessary to trace the system of politics pursued by Bonaparte since his accession of power. His government has been acknowledged by this country in the treaty of Amiens. The causes which produced the rupture of that treaty have never, in my opinion, been made so intelligible as to throw the whole blame upon Bonaparte. I, for one, never could thoroughly understand the reason why Malta was withheld after a guarantee on our part that it should be given up. However this may be, as it is my intention to show what has been done, the campaign

in Russia is the next great feature—Bonaparte's defeats, and the entrance of the allies into France: the restoration of that dynasty, which has cost Europe nearly thirty years of continual war to effect. We have borne a share in this conflict, in every way expensive; and we now see this same France receiving Bonaparte as the arbiter of its destinies. The same man, who has almost commanded Europe to the boundaries of the Vistula: who has renounced power when he could no longer use it for the aggrandizement of *France;* and, in apparent exile from the great concerns of Europe, has practised and effected plans, which have restored him to empire, unclogged and unfettered with any restrictions, which the successful armies of the allies might have imposed. He reascends the throne of France, which the Bourbons, in whose cause all Europe has combined for nearly thirty years, were unable to

keep, even although supported there by it. While that dynasty was in possession, has this man traversed the country for four hundred miles; and, without firing a single shot, has extruded a government thus established and supported. During this time, a congress was assembled at Vienna, where all the different interests were to be adjusted — where every power had its minister. What has there been done to conciliate the different powers, to accommodate conflicting interests, to form an establishment, which might be durable, and promise a repose to Europe, has not yet been declared, and probably never will be, unless a disposition to negotiate should be evinced, which, surely, is devoutly to be hoped for. Would it not be advisable to pause before another war is commenced, and learn what are the demands which France may now make; what limits to her empire she may now deem sufficient, before

another crusade is determined upon. The argument of her exhaustion is of little avail, because England cannot state that she is powerful, nor can the other powers of Europe. The system of policy, therefore, which had for its basis the restoration of the Bourbons, has, when effected, proved untenable. Let us suppose that the mass of the people are quiescent, and that it is the military only who have replaced Bonaparte on the throne — if any of the powers of Europe enter France, may not the people become the military? and may there not be another *levy en masse* for the preservation of the kingdom? Such was the effect of the last invasion. It is difficult to tame an animal driven to madness; but it is impossible to answer for the ravages such a madness may occasion; and it is surely wiser to attempt pacification. War can always be declared; but its consequences, the experience gathered since the

creation of the world cannot assist in foretelling.

But, it may be said, this is not the case; the Bourbons are not driven from the throne, nor is Bonaparte in possession of the resources of the empire. The cause may, probably, not be quite decided; but so much is done towards their destruction, that they present a very hopeless case for the farther interference of Europe. The Bourbons were in full possession; and now where is their power? What part of all France declares for the lily? Where are their troops? Who their generals? Where are their means to appoint an army? On the other side, Bonaparte is in possession of the capital. Hardly can the conduct of his marshals be equivocal; otherwise why was his progress not impeded? How could he pass Toulon, where there was a garrison of 15,000 men, under the command of Massena, an able general?

Why did not Ney, who hung on his rear, after he had passed Lyons, destroy him? Where was Soult—Suchet? Where all the marshals and generals (confessedly experienced, able men), in possession of the important trust of the empire? Perhaps it may be said, they could not depend upon their troops. This I think a sufficient reply. The army of France, *then*, is devoted to the cause of Bonaparte. This army has received an accession of all the prisoners of war, to the amount of nearly 400,000 men. Can it be doubted what course his marshals will pursue. I fear the communication between them has been too well understood during his retreat. If then this is the case, the cause of the Bourbons rests for support only on the powers of Europe. What those powers latterly, in strict combination, have done, I have thus shortly stated. Although this alliance may not have strictly existed for

the period mentioned, yet, in the last instance, it was united, and the grand object effected. England has been the main spring of action since the year 1793; and has, by subsidising with her money, by furnishing all contingencies, kept this combination in unison.

I now, therefore, put the question, whether England, with an accumulated national debt, with the excessive weight of taxation, with the high increase upon every article of consumption, can afford to make farther exertion in this cause, should even *all* the other powers of Europe acquiesce? Independent of the losses and privations of the late war, among other conclusions, the revival of the slave trade; the restoration of the pope, and of the order of the jesuits, an order whose principles are inimical to all existing governments; the restoration of the inquisition, and the dear bought ingratitude of the be-

loved Ferdinand, in whose preservation we shared our means of blood and treasure; are no insignificant subjects for reflection, to a people like the English, before they embark in a new contest, when the last has proved so ruinous, so ineffectual, and so unsatisfactory in its conclusions.

The feelings, which were roused in this country upon the breaking out of the French revolution, have been much embittered during the unhappy contest; and have grown into prejudices it may be difficult to repress. But were it not wiser to ask, how much the French have been goaded to the haughty tone they have assumed, in the scale of Europe, by the various combinations, which have existed since the first rupture? Would it not be wiser, therefore, to try what could be done by conciliation? It is a delusive hope, that the war is only against Bonaparte and the military. Europe will find it a war

against France; and that France headed by an expert, able, commanding, subtle genius, who will not long remain single in the conflict. His powers of intrigue have already baffled the rest of Europe, when removed from an ostensible command. What may it not effect? What has it not effected?

Europe cannot act without the assistance of England. Money is the sinew of war, and that money must be levied here. I do not affect to point out what particular mode should be pursued—as to what may be considered indemnities, what equivalents—all that I think necessary is, to hope the country will pause, and not proceed to war until there appears no alternative. To say there can be no peace while Bonaparte lives, and that no faith can be relied on with him, is to breathe interminable hostility; for, when he may be no more, others of his school may rise, who may keep alive

the spirit of the French nation, thus exasperated by the conduct of the rest of Europe.

I have avoided minute detail and argument, intending to show the great outline of the policy of Europe, the conduct of it, and the period up to March 1815. The conclusion then stands—England is exactly where she started, as to the principle of dictating to the French, who shall be their ruler, with exhausted means to begin a new contest, after having restored the object of contention, who was unable to preserve it. England has found, that all her immense subsidies have been ineffectual in preserving a connexion among the continental powers, and why she has to hope more sincerity and good faith, in a new war, than has appeared in the last, I cannot conceive.

If, therefore, England determines upon the principle, that the French nation must be exterminated, and that all chances must

be taken; but that as much of Europe as can be brought to enter into such a scheme shall have English money, she will find, in the outset, all the powers have a price; and, during the exterminating conflict, defaulters, as usual, will appear; and, in the end, she will find, that she remains just so much worse than she is now, as she is worse now than when she began the late war.

Middle Temple,
March 25, 1815.

THE END.